Philad.a March 19th 1811.

Dear Sir,

The information which you gave me on Sunday last, that a letter had been addressed to you, to be laid before the Vestry, respecting my celebrations of a late marriage, induces me to meet the censure or unfavorable representations which it may contain, by also addressing a letter to you for the same purpose, stating the circumstances which led me to perform the marriage ceremony.

On Saturday the 12th, or Sunday the 13th of January, a well dressed and genteel-looking young man called on me to request I would marry a couple, either on that or the following evening. I told him that would depend upon certain circumstances which respected the legality of the connexion; and proceeded to ask who were the parties. He replied, "I, Sir, am one." "Are you of age, Sir?" said I. "O, yes Sir" replied he, "I give you my word and honour I am of full age, above 21." "An

who," said I, "Sir, is the other party?" "Miss Eliza Farrel," was his answer. "And is she of age also?" "I believe so, Sir, she is turned of 19." "That" said I, "Sir is not the age at which a woman has a right to dispose of herself in marriage - she also must be one and twenty." "If that be the case", replied he, "she certainly is not of age what then is to be done?" "I cannot marry her," said I, "without the consent of her parents or guardians". "She has no parents", replied he, "but lives with her aunt who brought her up". - "Does her aunt approve of the marriage?" "O yes, Sir, very fully." "Then, Sir," said I, she must be present at the ceremony, or I cannot perform it." "It is her intention, Sir, to be present, and she will confirm the assurances I have given you". "Well Sir, said I, if I do marry you I shall rely upon your honour for the truth of those assurances". ~~you deceive me~~. "You may do that, Sir," said he, "with the most perfect safety, I would not deceive you".

At the appointed time the company came, consisting of the bride and bridegroom, another young man and woman, and a very respectable looking woman of middle age, who told me upon inquiry, that she was the aunt

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of the bride, that she had brought her up, her parents being both dead, and that she fully consented to the marriage - that her name was Mary Golson. I apologized for asking so many questions by stating the responsibility of my situations, and the serious nature of the marriage contract. The assurances of perfect propriety in this case were repeated, and I married them. Had I in the smallest degree suspected deception, I certainly should not have done so, or, should have required an authentication of their assertions; but the respectability of their appearance, and the apparent candour and sincerity of their united declarations prevented any apprehension of deception. When I entered the bridegrooms name (John Cooper Seckel) in my register, together with those of his bride, and Mary Golson, her declared aunt, I asked him if he was related to Mr Lawrence Seckel; he said he was not.

Now, Sir, tho' I have uniformly endeavoured to observe all necessary cautions,

and have frequently refused to marry persons if I had the smallest ground for suspicion, and required proof of the validity of their assertions, and thereby have given much offence, when I might have married them with perfect safety-yet, in the present case it appears I have committed an error: but, if people whose appearance and manner are calculated to inspire confidence, will basely combine together to tell such deliberate and wilful lies, they, and not the innocent Clergyman, should suffer the censure or punishment. Had the truth been told, I certainly should have refused to marry them: but, while our marriage act remains thus shamefully defective, by throwing in such cases the whole responsibility upon the clergyman, we must be exposed to imposition. I lament the present occurrence, and had I suspected the man to be a minor, I should have thought myself highly culpable, in marrying him without his parents, masters, or guardians consent; but as I have been thus cruelly imposed upon, I trust you will not consider me

answerable for the error of the transaction.

My son John was in my study at and before the celebration of the marriage; and upon my desiring him to state his recollection of the circumstances, without knowing that any thing had occurred or been said upon the subject, he amply confirms the foregoing narration, with the addition of a perfect remembrance that I again asked J. C. Seckel his own age, which he declared to be above 21. and that Mary Golson confirmed his assertion by her positive declaration of her knowledge of its truth.

With great respect and esteem,

I am, D.r Sir, — Yr. mo. hble. Servt

Jas Abercrombie.

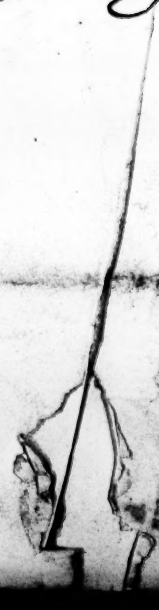
P.S. I hope, Sir, you have been convinced, by the testimony of Mr Meredith, that I did not officiously interfere with respect to his change of seat. All I did in the business was, to ask Mr Leister to relinquish his seat to Mr Meredith, (having previously been informed that you had consented to the exchange) and to assist him in choosing another from Mr Hill's list of vacant seats. Yr J. A.

James Mercer's bill

March 19. 1811

Relative to the Marriage

of L. Cocke



Phil^{a} March 22. 1811

Dear Sir,

I would thank you if you would inform Vestry, that I would take it as a particular favour, if they would use such means as is in their power to make a settlement with me.

I am sure they will not think my request unreasonable, when I inform them, that for the four last years, there has not been a time in which they have not been indebted to me Two Thousand Dollars, & often a greater sum.

Should they now settle with me to the 25th Inst:, they would have to pay me $2899.99/100

The above statement, I think, correct; if it should not be so, you Sir can set it right.

I am with much esteem
your very humb^{l} Serv^{t}
Rob^{t} Blackwell

Mr Tho^{s} Lumpston
Church Warden

Mr Thos Cumpston

Church Warden

Copy of a letter

Philada. October 23. 1811

Gentlemen

The late resignation of my associate in the ministry. the Revd. Doctor Blackwell. appears to me to afford a proper occasion for again introducing to Your consideration the subject of my Salary, as an assistant Minister to the Congregation over which You preside, and in which I have for seven Years enjoyed the privilage of officiating by Your appointments, — You will doubtless recollect Gent.n that in the year 1798 & 1799 impelled by stern necessity, I applied to you for an increase of Salary the reasonableness of my application was then, & I believe, acknowledged while at the same time you were sensible of the propriety of increasing the emoluments of the Bishop, which then remain as they were before his Consecration —

The affluent Circumstances of the other Episcopal Ministers induced the Bishop that he would neither require nor receive any addition to his Compensation more especially as an increase of the Church funds could only effected by an assessment on the Pews which you then thought should be very limited —

Under this sentiment the Vestry came to the resolution of raising an additional Sum by

of 1200 Dollars from the proceeds - 600 of
Which were to be appropriated to the Bishop
and the residue was intended for me. a
Committee of the Vestry was also appointed respec-
=tfully to inform Doctor Blackwell of the
Motives by which the had been influenced and
to express their hope that he would feel no
dissatisfaction Very unexpectedly the Communication
was received by him with expression of much
displeasure. I was informed of D. B. warmth
on the occasion by my luxuriant friend and
next door Neighbor Mr Joseph Swift Sins-
=tantly expressed to him my desire that there
should be no dissention or dissatisfaction on
My account and beg. that as Dr B. insisted
upon it a division of the 600 Dollars for Annum
might take place and said I would endeav
to form a School to assist me in supplying
the unavoidable expences of my large and
increasing family, Mr Swifts reply was. well
Sir if you are willing to accept in the div-
=ision he assured the Vestry will make it up to
You at some future day. the division was
accordingly made thought as my friend John
Donaldson who was then in the City told me
it was granted to each of us as a grant not
as permanent additional salary, in order that
if I could not make out without the whole
sum it might be given to me as originally
intended. I however struggled on until that

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determining to suffer any inconvenience rather
to renew a subject which had excited such
unpleasant emotions in my brother Clergymen
but as that gentleman has now resigned I
think myself justifiable in making my last
appeal to the justice and generosity of the trustees
whom I have faithfully served with the
unremitted exertion of my best abilities for
Eighteen Years with a salary which the most
benevolent would allow to be inadequate to
the support of my family notwithstanding
other emoluments have presented themselves
to me which in a pecuniary point of view
were most Many desirable during the former
part of my ministry every Year considerably
diminished the little property I possessed at
the time of my ordination at last as you
know I became considerably involved in debt
which I have not yet been enabled entirely
to discharge. My association with Doctor Ustick
in the academy for 3 years instead of lead-
ing me relief added to my embarrassments since
the dissolution of our connection My school
has indeed afforded me the means of sustenance
though not uniformly for at the expiration
of some quarters I have not been able to
do more than defray the necessary expences

of the Institution but the pittance I can delay
to sustain it can not I am sensible be
much longer supported by me and the interruption
which it occasions to my theological studys
and to my restricted attention to and visitation
of the Members of our extensive Congregations
renders its duties which I had hitherto faithfully
and I trust satisfactorly discharged in
expressly irksome and distressing to me ——
You will I trust also consider Gent.ⁿ that
in consequence of the building of St Pauls
Church, I have been obliged to relinquish
the two Congregations of Oxford & All Saints
which I regularly attended every third Sunday
during three years; and for which I received
200 Dollars p. Ann.: that not only the
exercise & change of air occasioned by the ride
is now interrupted, but the satisfaction of
administering to two large & rapidly increasing
congregations, & their assistance which their
salary & perquisites afforded in defraying my
expenses. — When these facts are considered
by you, together with the great depreciation
of money since my original appointments,
I flatter myself Gent.ⁿ that you will not
consider my present application unreasonable;
being confident that you are ardently desirous
to render the circumstances of your Clergy
comfortable & equable; with profound respect & esteem
I am Gent.ⁿ your most Obl.ᵈ Hble Servt. Jas Abercrombie